A

LETTER

TO THE

Right Hon. THOMAS HARLEY, Esq;

LORD-MAYOR of the City of LONDON,

AND

One of His MAJESTY's *Most Honourable* Privy Council.

To which is added,

A Serious Expostulation with the LIVERY,

On their late Conduct, towards JOHN WILKES, Esq; during the Election of the Four CITY MEMBERS.

By an Alderman of LONDON.

——— Pudet hæc opprobria Nobis
Et dici potuisse, & non potuisse refelli.
OVID.

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A

LETTER

TO THE

Right Hon. THOMAS HARLEY, Eſq;

MY LORD!

PERMIT me, at once, to congratulate your Lordſhip and the public: your Lordſhip, on being re-elected one of the Repreſentatives of the City of London in the enſuing Parliament; the public, on having, by that means, ſecured ſo *uncorrupt* a ſenator, and

ſo *able* a legiſlator. And I the rather, my Lord, felicitate you on the preſent occaſion, as it is very well known, that, for ſome time before the election came on, you had very little chance of obtaining that honour, which you have now happily acquired. That this was really the caſe, appears beyond the poſſibility of a doubt, from the ſteps which you took previous to the election. Letters were written by yourſelf, by your relations, and by all your numerous creatures and dependants, to the Liverymen of London, beſeeching them for G—d's ſake, for your Lordſhip's ſake, for the ſake of your family, for the honour of the City; in a word, conjuring them by every motive, which fear and apprehenſion could ſuggeſt to your own mind, or which you imagined could excite pity and compaſſion in the minds of others, to re-elect you

one

one of the four City-members. Nay, letters were written to almoſt every houſekeeper in London and Weſtminſter, intreating them to uſe their intereſt with their friends among the Livery, to ſupport you on the day of election.

Not thinking yourſelf ſecure even with theſe reſources, you had recourſe, it is ſaid, to the good offices of the M——y, who ſent their inſtructions to Mr. ————, one of the clerks of the Board of Ordinance, in the Tower, deſiring him to ſolicit, or rather to command (for the M—— always command) the Liverymen of London to re-elect their four former members. And yet, my Lord, with all theſe mighty preparations, you had well nigh miſſed of your aim. For, by what fatality it happened I know not; but ſo it was, that, on the day of election, you could ſcarce pro-

procure a majority of hands in your favour. Sir Robert Ladbroke, indeed, Mr. Beckford, and Mr. Wilkes, had evidently a majority of hands: but it was a doubt with many, whether your Lordſhip or Mr. Patterſon had the greater ſhow of hands; or rather, indeed, it was no doubt: the general opinion was, that Mr. Patterſon had the greater. And yet ſome how, either by the favour of the ——— or by ſome other means, your Lordſhip was juſtled into the number of thoſe who were returned as Members of Parliament.

This, my Lord, was a very great favour, from whomever you received it, as it ſaved you the expence of the poll, which you know is conſiderable. It is true, that when once the poll began, your Lordſhip ſoon got the ſtart of moſt of the other candidates, and by hard puſhing, you kept the ground

you

you had gained, and at laſt was declared to be duly elected. But was the election, my Lord, perfectly free? Can any election be ſaid to be ſo, where acceſs is denied to the friends of any of the candidates? And yet, my Lord, was not this the caſe on the laſt day of the poll, when, by your Lordſhip's orders, the gates of the hall were ſhut, on the frivolous pretext of keeping out the mob, but, in reality, to exclude the friends of the other candidates? Beſides, my Lord, can any election be ſaid to be free, where the M——y openly interpoſe in the conteſt? But have not the M——y interpoſed in the late election, in the moſt open and barefaced manner? May not Mr. —— letter to the Liverymen of London, be fairly conſidered as an expreſs injunction from the M——y, directing them what members they ſhould chooſe?

I am

I am not, for my own part, ſufficiently acquainted with the law of parliament, to ſay, whether ſuch an interpoſition be a ſufficient ground for voiding the election; though I believe the parliament frequently has, eſpecially when the Miniſtry had not a majority on their ſide, voided many elections for a leſs irregularity. But this I will ſay, that Mr. ——— has been guilty of a moſt flagrant violation of the laws of his country; a violation, which expoſes him, if the law takes its courſe, to the forfeiture of his office, or, at leaſt, to the penalty of a ſevere fine. I imagine, however, that if he were to be tried by your Lordſhip, he would eſcape more eaſily than the rioters, who lately broke the lamps at the Manſion-houſe. Mr. ———, it is true, has violated the moſt ſacred laws of his country; laws eſſential to the welfare, and even to the very eſſence of

of a free ſtate (for there is an expreſs law, prohibiting perſons poſſeſſed of certain offices under the Government, from being elected members of parliament, or interfering in the election of members). The rioters have only committed a ſlight treſpaſs: but Mr. ——— has done you a favour; the rioters have done you an injury: the former has contributed to ſecure your election; the latter have expreſſed their contempt of your perſon, and their indignation at your conduct: and, therefore, I ſuppoſe, that, in paſſing ſentence upon them, you would have ſome regard to the motive of their actions: nay, perhaps you might adopt for once the jeſuitical maxim, *that the end ſanctifies the means*; and in that caſe Mr. ———'s crime would be converted into a meritorious deed, and the ſlight offence

of the rioters aggravated into a moſt atrocious crime.

Waving, however, the freedom of the election, which it is neither my buſineſs, nor my intention to conteſt; I have a few queſtions to put to your Lordſhip, to which I ſhould be glad to hear ſatisfactory anſwers. And firſt, my Lord, I muſt take the liberty of aſking you, what could be your reaſon for departing from the practice invariably obſerved at all former elections of members of parliament for the City of London, viz. that of the four candidates, returned by the common hall, joining their names in an addreſs to the Livery. Mr. Wilkes, it is certain, had as great a majority of hands as any of the candidates; nay indeed, he had the greateſt majority of any one of them. Your Lordſhip, it is well known, had the leaſt majority; and, as I ſaid above, it is even a queſtion,

tion, whether you had a majority at all. It might, therefore have been expected, that a man in this predicament would have behaved with ſome modeſty.

And yet, my Lord, if fame ſays true, and fame, though ſometimes a liar, often ſays true, this ſtrange and unexpected innovation was owing to your Lordſhip. Sir Robert Ladbroke, it is ſaid, and Mr. Beckford propoſed, that the four candidates returned by the common-hall, ſhould, as uſual, join their names in an addreſs to the Livery. This propoſal was rejected by your Lordſhip, with a petulance and peeviſhneſs ill ſuiting your character. What, my Lord, could be your motive for ſuch conduct? Was it pride that prompted you? You are, it is true, a Lord's ſon, and a Lord's brother; nay, indeed, you are a Lord in your own proper perſon: but then

you ſhould conſider, that you are but a temporary Lord; and that, in ſix months hence, you will be plain Thomas Harley, Eſq; merchant in London.

Beſides, Lord's ſon, and Lord's brother as you are, and temporary Lord in your own proper perſon, it would have reflected no diſgrace upon you, or upon any Lord, temporary or perpetual, in the kingdom, to have had his name joined in an addreſs with Mr. Wilkes. I ſhould rather think, that, in the preſent caſe, it would have been, if not an honour, at leaſt an advantage. A little of Mr. Wilkes's mercury mixed with the City lead, might have freed the metropolis from the opprobrium, under which it has long laboured, of being the ſeat of dulneſs. But, perhaps, you was afraid, that the wicked wag would have made you the object of his wit, and the butt of his ſatire; and as you

was

was probably conſcious of having ſomething ridiculous about you, you did not think it prudent to have, for an aſſociate, a man, who was ſo perfect an adept in the management of theſe weapons. So far, my Lord, I own you acted wiſely; for, not to pay Mr. Wilkes a compliment, which he does not deſerve, I believe he is very little capable of withſtanding temptations of this nature. Had he ever ſpared you, it would not have been out of reſpect to your noble birth; it would have been out of compaſſion to your weak underſtanding.

But, I think I can find out a better reaſon than pride, and that is intereſt. I ſay intereſt, my Lord: your Lordſhip is a citizen and a merchant; and as ſuch muſt know, that intereſt is a much more general and more powerful motive of action than pride. But how could intereſt operate upon your Lordſhip?

ſhip? Why thus: your brother has a place at court, being one of the Lords of the Bedchamber; and you yourſelf have a lucrative contract with the Government: and you probably was afraid, leſt, by ſeeming to favour Mr. Wilkes, or even by ſeeming not to oppoſe him, you ſhould at once deprive your brother of his place, and yourſelf of your contract. In this again, I own, you acted very wiſely; but did you act freely? Did you act with that ſpirit of independance, which becomes a Repreſentative of the City of London? On the contrary, could the meaneſt member for the meaneſt borough in Cornwall have acted more ſervilely?

But perhaps you have another reaſon: you burned, when Sheriff, number 45 of the North Briton, and you might think it beneath you to join your name in an addreſs with a man, whoſe

whoſe writings you had committed to the flames. I will allow you, my Lord, to aſſume theſe airs, when your Lordſhip is capable of compoſing ſuch a paper.

Aye! but you'll ſay, not only were Mr. Wilkes's writings committed to the flames: his perſon was alſo committed to the Tower. It was, my Lord, and perhaps lodged in the ſame room where once was lodged the perſon of your great granduncle. But Mr. Wilkes continued in the Tower but a few days: your great granduncle continued there almoſt two years. And as the time of their impriſonment was very different, ſo alſo was the cauſe of their commitment. Your great granduncle was committed for his *treaſonable* attempts to defeat the proteſtant ſucceſſion, and bring in a popiſh pretender: Mr. Wilkes was committed—I do not know for what—but moſt certainly not for treading in the foot-

footſteps of your great granduncle. On the contrary, his zealous attachment to the auguſt family now upon the throne, and his rooted averſion to the ſlaviſh and enſlaving family, which formerly poſſeſſed it, and was juſtly deprived of it, have always been univerſally known and acknowledged. And indeed it is not unlikely, that the too open profeſſion of theſe principles may have drawn upon him the reſentment of your Lordſhip; eſpecially if your Lordſhip inherits the principles of your family, which, in truth, is not improbable; for bad principles, we know, like ſome kinds of diſeaſes, often run in the blood.

But if this, my Lord, was your motive, you will, I dare ſay, keep it a ſecret; and perhaps will alledge, as a more plauſible reaſon, that you did not chooſe to join your name in an addreſs with a man of ſo vicious a life, and ſo pro-

profligate a character. Aye! my Lord, was that really your reaſon? was you afraid, leſt your own *pure*, *ſpotleſs*, *ſnow-white* character ſhould have been contaminated by the mere circumſtance of having your name joined in an addreſs with Mr. Wilkes? why truly, my Lord, if that was the caſe, you muſt be extremely delicate indeed. But what, my Lord, have you to object to Mr. Wilkes's private character? Dare you ſay, that he is not a man of honour, of honeſty, and integrity? I would not adviſe you to ſay ſo, leſt the law ſhould oblige you to unſay it.

But, perhaps, you will tell me, Mr. Wilkes is a man of pleaſure. I admit it my Lord; Mr. Wilkes is, or rather has been, a man of pleaſure; and what then? Are there no men of pleaſure in the city, and ſtill more at court? Baniſh all men of pleaſure from London and Weſtminſter, and I'm afraid you'll make a

terrible gap indeed. Beſides, my Lord, Mr. Wilkes will naturally be cured of this foible, as he advances in years; and, to ſpeak truth, I believe he is in a great meaſure, if not entirely, cured of it already. Let me likewiſe obſerve, that man of pleaſure as he may have been, he never did, ſo far as I ever heard, invade, either by force or by fraud, the honour of any maid or matron: ſo that even his pleaſures have been regulated by the ſtricteſt maxims of honour.

In plain Engliſh, Mr. Wilkes's great fault is, not that he is a man of pleaſure, but that he is not a man of prudence, or rather of cunning; and never endeavoured to conceal his foibles. Many, my Lord, of you wiſe citizens, often appear better than you are: Mr. Wilkes, I'm afraid, has ſometimes appeared worſe. Had he been endued with a little of that gravity, which is ſo common among the Citizens

of

of London, and of which, it muſt be owned, they have enough, and to ſpare, he might now have paſſed for as *pious*, as *ſober*, and as *continent* a man, as any that lives between Temple-Bar and Aldgate. But, fool that he was, he could never bring himſelf to put on the *maſk of hypocriſy*, which, like the *virtue of charity*, covers a *multitude of ſins*. Conſcious of being poſſeſſed of real virtues and abilities, he has ever been little anxious to acquire fictitious ones; and ſatisfied with the ſubſtance, he has never minded the ſhadow. He could never perſuade himſelf to aſſume that formal, ſolemn, demure air, which he well knew to be often a cover for vice, and almoſt always a cover for ſtupidity.

What's the bent brow, or neck in thought reclin'd?
The *body's wiſdom*, to conceal the *mind*.
I ſee the *fool*, when I behold the *ſcreen*;
For 'tis the wiſe man's intereſt to be ſeen.
And be this truth eternal ne'er forgot,
Solemnity's a cover for a ſot. YOUNG.

Thus

Thus, my Lord, have I endeavoured to expoſe the futility of all the excuſes I ever heard made, for your refuſing to join your name in the ſame addreſs with Mr. Wilkes. But, whatever was your motive for this ſtrange conduct, I will take the freedom of whiſpering a ſecret in your Lordſhip's ear, and it is this; that the name of John Wilkes, Eſq; will be remembered and reſpected by the friends of liberty, when that of Thomas Harley, Eſq; is buried in oblivion.

A ſeriou

A ſerious expoſtulation with the Liverymen of London, on their late conduct during the Election of the four City-Members for the enſuing Parliament.

Gentlemen and fellow-Citizens!

FOR I ſhall ſtill diſtinguiſh you by thoſe names; though I muſt frankly confeſs, I begin to entertain ſome doubt whether you have any juſt pretenſions to the former; and for my own part, if your conduct on all future occaſions be of a piece with that which you obſerved in the late memorable conteſt, I ſhall be aſhamed to addreſs you by the latter.

For what, let me aſk you, can be more inconſiſtent with the character of a gentleman, than to falſify one's word, to break one's promiſe, to ſay one thing and do another, to inſpire a man with the moſt ſanguine hopes of ſucceſs at the very moment you intend to diſappoint him? If this be

acting the part of a gentleman, then I have formed a very improper notion of that character. But is not this the very part you have acted towards one of your late candidates? Had not Mr. Wilkes, on the day of election, by far the greateſt ſhow of hands, of any of thoſe who were put in nomination? But what ſincerity there was in theſe expreſſions of your zeal, the poll, which is now finiſhed, ſufficiently demonſtrates.

The truth is, gentlemen, you will hold up your hands for your liberties; you will huzza for your liberties; you will rail, you will bawl, you will clamour for your liberties; but I am fully convinced in my own mind, that not one in ſix of you would part with a ſingle cuſtomer for your liberties. Aye, gentlemen, here is the rub: you will do every thing for your liberties that does not interfere with your intereſt; but where that is concerned, you beg to be excuſed: your little, partial, ſelfiſh intereſts muſt firſt be conſulted, and then you will afterwards, if you conveniently can, take care of your liberties. Your

Your votes are given, not from any real regard to the merit of the different candidates, but merely in conſequence of your connections in trade. For had you been actuated by the former of theſe motives, you could not have failed of giving your votes to a man, who, notwithſtanding all that has been ſaid to the contrary by ſome court-ſycophants, has, I will venture to ſay, done and ſuffered more for the cauſe of liberty, than any other man ſince the days of the immortal Hampden. And is this the way to encourage others to ſtand up in defence of your liberties, to neglect the man who has ſtood up in their defence with ſuch undaunted reſolution?

The real patriot, it is true, feels an inexpreſſible pleaſure in performing acts beneficial to his country, independant of all conſideration in what manner they may be received by his fellow-citizens; and in this ſenſe ſurely, if in any, virtue is its own reward. But the ſecret pleaſure attending the performance of patriotic actions, is not a ſufficient incitement to the generality of mankind: they want ſomething more;

they want the applauſe of their fellow-citizens; not, I mean, that empty applauſe, which conſiſts merely in noiſy acclamation; for that, it muſt be owned, you have beſtowed upon Mr. Wilkes in as liberal and generous a manner as ever you beſtowed upon any perſon whatever: but I mean that ſincere applauſe, which proceeds from the heart, which is productive of real and viſible effects, and is followed by ſolid and ſubſtantial favours.

And here, gentlemen, I'm afraid, you will find it extremely difficult to juſtify your conduct. Upon the day of election, you held up your hands in favour of Mr. Wilkes; that is, you *virtually* promiſed him your votes, and *actually* choſe him one of your repreſentatives in parliament. And yet, when the neceſſity of a poll appeared, and you came, in good earneſt, to give your votes, you ſhamefully turned tail, and left him in the lurch. Upon what principles of juſtice, of equity, of honour, or of common honeſty, you can defend ſuch proceedings, I am really at a loſs to determine.

And yet, gentlemen, I ſhould be extremely glad to ſee ſome feaſible apology made in your behalf. For I am equally aſhamed and vexed to hear the greateſt part of the Liverymen of London ſtigmatized (as I daily hear them ſtigmatized) as a parcel of *low, venal, and mercenary wretches*; or what is yet worſe, of *falſe and deceitful hypocrites*. I know it has been ſaid in your defence, that the common-hall, on the day of election, was filled with the mob, and not with Liverymen. But this I can affirm, upon the beſt authority, to be an abſolute falſhood; nine tenths, at leaſt, of the aſſembly were Liverymen; and they all of them, almoſt to a man, held up their hands in Favour of Mr. Wilkes.

The truth is, gentlemen, I believe moſt of you have a real regard for Mr. Wilkes, but you were afraid to expreſs it, leſt you ſhould offend your cuſtomers; and as you thought you would not be diſtinguiſhed in the croud, you there gave full ſcope to the natural ſentiments of your hearts, and huzzaed and held up your hands for your favourite

vourite candidate. But the moment you came forward to poll, the piercing eye and inquiſitive look of alderman ſuch-a-one, 'ſquire ſuch-a-one, and Mr. ſuch-a-one, who bought their bread from one of you, their meat from another, their candles from a third, and their ſoap from a fourth; I ſay, gentlemen, the piercing eye and inquiſitive look of theſe worthy cuſtomers, ſtruck a damp upon your mind, made you give the lie to your heart, and induced you, I had almoſt ſaid compelled you, to withhold your votes from the man, whom, in your conſcience, you preferred to all the other candidates. Such is the *independence*, *the boaſted independence*, of the *worthy* Liverymen of the City of London!

Beſides, gentlemen, you very prudently, I will not ſay very nobly, conſidered, that *Verba volant, ſed litera ſcripta manet.* I beg pardon, gentlemen, for quoting this ſcrap of Latin: your *little Billies and Dickies*, if they have got into their *accidence*, will explain it to you. You wiſely reflected, that as in polling you muſt ſet down your names in a book, which was open to the

the inſpection of all the candidates, that book (like the book of doomſday) would riſe up in judgment againſt you: that the ſeveral candidates would there have an opportunity of diſtinguiſhing their friends from their foes, and would certainly withdraw their cuſtom and favours from thoſe who had not voted for them. And as to the promiſe, I mean the *virtual* promiſe, you had given to Mr. Wilkes (for ſuch I muſt conſider your holding up your hands in his favour) I ſay, gentlemen, as to that promiſe, you probably thought there could be no great harm in breaking it, agreeable to the maxim of the celebrated Thraſher and Poet, Stephen Duck, who ſays,

If words are wind, as ſome allow,
No promiſes can bind;
Since *breaking* of the ſtricteſt vow,
Is only *breaking wind.*

But, gentlemen, not only have you given your votes without any real regard to the merit of the different candidates, and merely

in

conſequence of your connections in trade, that is, from the loweſt and moſt mercenary motives: what is worſe, if I am rightly informed, ſome of you have even ſold your votes, and many of you kept back your votes to the very laſt, in expectation that their price would ſtill riſe; nay, it is confidently reported, that votes were bought and ſold as currently, tho' not as openly, as India-bonds or Bank-bills in Change-alley. If this be true, gentlemen, what is become of your wonted *probity and patriotiſm?* How can you be ſaid to be ſuperior to all *venality* and *corruption?* and in what reſpects is the City of London preferable to the meaneſt and moſt deſpicable Borough in the kingdom?

We have long heard of the *rotten parts* of the conſtitution, and the neceſſity of cutting off thoſe corrupted members, in order to prevent the infection from ſpreading: but if the accuſation brought againſt you by your enemies be well founded, the metropolis itſelf is the moſt *rotten part* of the conſtitution, and the ſtate, of conſequence, is irretriev-

irretrievably ruined. For though a man may live with the loſs of a hand, an arm, or a leg, I never yet heard of any one that lived after having loſt his head or his heart.

It was, therefore, very well obſerved by one of your brother liverymen, in an addreſs he made to the public, "That if the "venality and corruption, which have been "long openly preying upon the limbs of "our country, have at laſt ſecretly ſeized on "her heart and vitals in the city of Lon-"don, mortifying is our condition! Let "ſhame (ſays he) for ever ſeal up our lips, "and the name of LIBERTY be heard in "our ſtreets no more." Aye, gentlemen! but you may tell him, that if we do not hear of LIBERTY we ſhall hear of MONEY, and that is as good or better:

——— *quærenda pecunia primum;*
Virtus poſt nummos ———

That is, gentlemen (leſt your *little Billies and Dickies* ſhould not be able to explain it) give me a *plum*, and a fig for *liberty*.

The truth is, gentlemen, your *money* is your idol, your god: to that you will ſacrifice your liberty, your religion, your honour, your conſcience: in a word, every thing but ——— your *money*. And yet, gentlemen, let me tell you, that the inordinate love of money may defeat its own end; and that, from too eager a deſire of acquiring, you may, at laſt, loſe the means of preſerving: for if once your liberty is ſacrificed to your love of money, it will then be in the power of an arbitrary court to impoſe upon you whatever taxes, and levy upon you whatever contributions it pleaſes; and then you will find your money, your *dear*, your *beloved*, your *adored money*, ſlipping through your fingers you know not how, or perhaps raviſhed from you, whether you will or not. Think of this, gentlemen! and be content with poſſeſſing a little leſs money, in order to have the means of ſecuring what you have got.

I come now to conſider the objections, which you have to Mr. Wilkes, and which you

you alledged in excuſe for not chuſing him one of your repreſentatives in parliament. And firſt, ſome of you had the weakneſs to ſay, that you looked upon his offering himſelf a candidate for London, as an inſult offered to the city.]

But how, in G—d's name, will you prove it an inſult? Mr. Wilkes is a gentleman by birth and education. He has already diſtinguiſhed himſelf in the Britiſh ſenate, more, moſt certainly, than any of your preſent members; more, perhaps, than any member you ever had, Sir John Barnard excepted. He has ſhewn himſelf, beyond any of his compatriots, to be a ſteady friend to the rights and privileges of his fellow-ſubjects. He has not only been a hero; he has almoſt been a martyr in the glorious cauſe of liberty. He has given repeated and inconteſtible proofs of his being a man of ability, integrity, fortitude, and of every other quality, that can fit him for the diſcharge of the important truſt which he wiſhed you to repoſe in him.

How then can you call it an insult? what more would you have? ——— O ho! gentlemen, I understand you: you would have a man of fortune; a man possessed of one *plum*, or perhaps of two *plums*. Aye, aye, gentlemen, nothing, I find, but money will do in the city: money is the only passport to all your favours. You have weighed Mr. Wilkes in the balance, and have found him wanting —— in this most essential of all qualifications. The city would be debased in being represented by a man of small fortune. And yet, gentlemen, it is the general opinion, that some of your present members are not men of very large fortunes.

Besides, permit me to observe, that Mr. Wilkes was born to, and was once actually possessed of, as good a fortune — I will not say as some of your *city dons*; for he was never, I believe, master of a whole *plum*, perhaps not even of half a *plum* —— but of as good a fortune, as one half the members of the house of commons. And tho', partly by a concurrence of untoward circumstances, partly by his own indiscretion and

and want of oeconomy — for I will not defend him in points, where, I am perſuaded, he would not defend himſelf. —— I ſay, though partly by a concurrence of untoward circumſtances, partly by his own indiſcretion and want of oeconomy, that fortune be conſiderably impaired, and almoſt ruined; yet is he in a fair way of having it re-eſtabliſhed upon ſuch a footing, as will enable him to act with as much freedom and independance as any member of the Britiſh legiſlature.

Let me likewiſe aſk you on this head, gentlemen, how you can have the preſumption to ſay, that a man who has been choſen by ſuch a great majority of the independant Freeholders of the county of Middleſex, has offered you an inſult in declaring himſelf a candidate for the city of London? Are thoſe *low, venal, and mercenary wretches, the Liverymen of London* — for ſuch, it is affirmed, you have plainly proved yourſelves, by your late baſe conduct. ——— Are theſe wretches a more reſpectable body than the Freeholders of Mid-

Middleſex? You cannot, you dare not ſay it: if you ſhould, you will only add to our pity for your ignorance, the contempt that is due to ſuch intolerable vanity.

Another objection, which, as it is currently reported, you have to Mr. Wilkes, is, that he wrote a ſmutty and obſcene book, intitled an — — —, and attacked the king's ſpeech with an indecent freedom. But here, Gentlemen, I apprehend you are under a conſiderable miſtake. Mr. Wilkes did not write this book: it was written by the ſon of a worthy Archbiſhop of Canterbury, himſelf a diſtinguiſhed member of the houſe of commons. Mr. Wilkes is, indeed, ſaid to have printed this book: and what then? would you anathematize him merely on that account? I am afraid, Gentlemen, that, by this method of procceeding, you would anathematize one half of the writers and printers that ever exiſted in England. I will not, however, undertake to vindicate Mr. Wilkes in this particular. I think it would have been much better, had he printed no ſuch book, or given the world occaſion to ſuſpect that he had printed

ſuch

ſuch a book. Nay, I think it would have been much better, had no ſuch book been written or printed at all; for I muſt freely give my verdict againſt all kind of books, that have the leaſt tendency to debauch the minds or corrupt the morals of the people.

Here, however, I cannot help remarking, that many of your grave, formal gentlemen, who exclaim publickly againſt all books of obſcenity, are yet the firſt to purchaſe and read them privately; and I make no doubt but if all the libraries in town were examined, more books of that kind would be found in the libraries of your ſober, ſedate gentlemen, than in thoſe of the greateſt rakes and libertines. Far be it from me, gentlemen, to juſtify the conduct either of the one or of the other; but I own I cannot ſuppreſs my indignation, when I hear an old hypocritical Lecher, who, under the maſk of virtue and religion, indulges himſelf in the moſt criminal pleaſures, damning to perpetual infamy in this world, and perhaps to eternal puniſhments in the next,

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the man who ventures to write or print a little obſcenity.

As to the other part of the accuſation, viz. that Mr. Wilkes attacked the king's ſpeech with an indecent freedom, it cannot be denied, that Mr. Wilkes did attack the king's ſpeech; but he attacked it as the miniſter's, not as the king's; and as ſuch it ever has been, and ever ought to be conſidered, at leaſt in parliament. It has, I think, been always held as a maxim in the law, that the king can do no wrong; that is, in his public capacity, he can do nothing: in other words, he can do nothing without the advice of his ſervants, who muſt be reſponſible for his conduct. The firſt prince that ever attempted to overturn this ſalutary maxim, was that unhappy and infatuated ſovereign, King Charles the Firſt, who, when any thing was done wrong, pretended that it was done by himſelf, not by his ſervants, and therefore could not be queſtioned. The conſequence of which doctrine was, that no miniſter could be called to account for any treachery he had been

been guilty of towards his country. The conſequence of which doctrine, were it once generally received, would (I will venture to ſay) be the total ſubverſion of our free government, and the eſtabliſhment of an abſolute and deſpotic monarchy. For the propoſition, when drawn out in its proper form, will ſtand thus: *The king can do no wrong; that is, nothing which the king does muſt be ſuppoſed to be wrong, or ought to be queſtioned. But the king may do any thing, or every thing: therefore any kind, or every kind of wrong may be done, and yet cannot be queſtioned.* Let thoſe who are better ſkilled than I am in the quirks of the law, or the ſubtilties of logic, diſprove this concluſion, if they can. For my own part, it appears to me to be as plain as any demonſtration in Euclid.

I therefore repeat it; as the king can do no wrong, he can, in his public capacity, do nothing. He cannot even be ſuppoſed, at leaſt in either houſe, to compoſe his ſpeech to the parliament: that is, and ever has been, conſidered as the ſpeech of the miniſter, and ought to be treated accordingly. I own, indeed,

that as it is delivered by the king, it ought, on that account, to be treated with great decency and reſpect; as every thing moſt certainly ought that is communicated by the ſovereign. I likewiſe acknowledge, that no man is at liberty to ſay, in writing or in converſation, the ſame things of the king's ſpeech as he may ſay in parliament. And here, if I miſtake not, lay Mr. Wilkes's error. In the heat of altercation and the hurry of compoſition, he forgot this neceſſary diſtinction. He forgot, or at leaſt he acted as if he had forgot, that he could not decently, and perhaps not even ſafely, uſe the ſame freedom with the king's ſpeech without as within the walls of St. Stephen's chapel. But ſurely for this overſight he has already ſuffered more than any other man ever ſuffered for ſuch an overſight. It ought alſo to be conſidered, that as Mr. Wilkes attacked the king's ſpeech, not as the king's but as the miniſter's, the reflections he made upon it, muſt be ſuppoſed to be levelled, not at the king, but at the miniſter.

And

And in truth, if all thoſe, who have ſaid, that kings' ſpeeches often contain many groundleſs aſſertions, were to be treated as libellers; I'm afraid that, inſtead of one, ten thouſand libellers might be found in the kingdom; as I believe there have been very few ſpeeches delivered from the throne for this century paſt and upwards, that have not been accuſed of containing the groſſeſt impoſitions. They were not, therefore, the king's friends, they were his enemies, who adviſed him to conſider the reflections made upon his ſpeech as a perſonal inſult offered to his majeſty. The inſult, if there was any, was offered to the miniſter, not to the king. But it has always been the cuſtom of weak and worthleſs miniſters to juſtify their meaſures by the ſanction of the royal name, and to endeavour to ſcreen themſelves from popular reſentment, by taking ſhelter behind the throne.

The throne, however, never was, and, I hope, never will be able to protect any wicked miniſter from the juſt indignation of the people. If it ſhould, then farewell to

our liberties. All reſpect, I own, is due to the royal authority, while it is employed to proper purpoſes; but if ever it ſhould be employed to purpoſes, with which it can, *legally* and *conſtitutionally*, have no concern, it ought to be entirely diſregarded.

Such, we find, were the ſentiments of that patriotic, and yet loyal nobleman the Earl of Oſſory, in the reign of King Charles the Second, who, when an attempt was made upon his father's life by ſome aſſaſſins, ſuppoſed to be ſuborned by the Duke of Buckingham, addreſſed that nobleman, even in the king's preſence, to the following effect: "My lord, I know well, "that you are at the bottom of this late at- "tempt upon my father: but I give you "warning, if by any means he comes to a "violent end, I ſhall not be at a loſs to "know the author: I ſhall conſider you "as the aſſaſſin: I ſhall treat you as ſuch; "and wherever I meet you I ſhall *piſtol* "you, though you ſtood behind the *king's* "*chair*; and I tell it you in his *majeſty's* "*preſence*, that you may be ſure I ſhall not "fail of performance *."

* Carte's Ormond, vol. 2, p. 225.

A third

A third objection which you have to Mr. Wilkes (for I have likewiſe heard ſome of you make ſuch an objection to him) is, that he endeavoured to inflame the inhabitants of one part of the kingdom againſt thoſe of the other, and to involve his country in all the horrors and calamities of a civil war. But this objection, after all the ſpecious things that have been ſaid in ſupport of it, is as ill founded as either of the preceding.

Mr. Wilkes, it is true, did attack the Scottiſh favourite with all that force of argument, all that flow of eloquence, all that keenneſs of wit, and all that poignancy of ſatire, of which he is ſuch a conſummate maſter; but he attacked him as a favourite, not as a Scotchman; and if he endeavoured to render him more odious on account of his being a Scotchman, it was chiefly owing to the Scots themſelves; not indeed of the Scots in general, but of ſuch of them as were the immediate creatures and dependants of the favourite; who, conſcious of the weakneſs of their patron's cauſe, artfully attempted to confound it with the

the cauſe of his country: ſo that every Scotchman (and, to their honour be it ſpoken, many ſuch there were) who would not defend, at all hazards, the conduct of the favourite, was branded, by the favourite's creatures, as an enemy to his country.

Such, I ſay, was the origin of confounding the cauſe of the favourite with that of his country. The opinion was firſt broached by knaves, and afterwards adopted by fools; and I will take upon me to affirm, that it was never adopted by any other. The ſenſible part of the Scottiſh nation were too wiſe ever to give into ſuch a ridiculous notion. They nobly and gallantly ſaid, that if Lord B—— was guilty, he ought not to be protected, becauſe he was a Scotchman; nor if innocent, ought he to be condemned, becauſe he was a native of that country. But had Mr. Wilkes attacked the whole Scottiſh nation, without pointing his ſatire againſt any particular perſon, he might eaſily have produced precedents for ſuch a conduct. Dean Swift acted this very part in the reign of Queen Anne. He wrote a libel againſt the whole Scottiſh

tiſh nation, fraught with ſuch malice and virulence, as inflamed to the higheſt degree the inhabitants of that part of the iſland, and induced the government to offer a reward for diſcovering the author. Yet Dean Swift then was, and ſtill is conſidered as a very worthy man; and why Mr. Wilkes ſhould for the ſame conduct (though of the ſame conduct he has not been guilty) be branded as an incendiary, I cannot well diſcern.

Far be it from me, however, to approve of ſuch illiberal proceedings. I am, for my own part, a citizen of the world; and I entertain a moſt ſupreme contempt for every one that is not. I eſteem a man of ſenſe, I love a man of virtue, wherever I find him, and wherever born or bred, were it even in the highlands of Scotland, or in the wilds of Weſtphalia; and I deſpiſe a fool, and hate a knave, though born in the city of London, nay in St. James's palace. I muſt therefore diſapprove of all national reflections. They are always odious, becauſe they are unjuſt. Men of parts and probity are to be found in all countries, and

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perhaps too, in a pretty equal degree in all countries.

I own, indeed, that different nations are diſtinguiſhed by different peculiarities of humour and temper. The Engliſh, for inſtance, are ſteady and reſolute; the Scots, fiery and impetuous; the Iriſh, raſh and headſtrong; the French, airy and volatile; the Spaniards, grave and ſolemn; and the Germans, heavy and phlegmatic. But ſtill I inſiſt, that in point of moral and intellectual qualities (by which laſt I mean not actual knowledge, but the capacity of attaining knowledge) all nations are nearly upon a level; and that no one nation has a better right than another to throw reflections upon the reſt. I therefore repeat it, all national reflections are unjuſt. But if Mr. Wilkes did endeavour to render Lord B—— more odious on account of his being a Scotchman, he very probably thought he might juſtify his conduct by the example of all political writers, who ſeem, time out of mind, to have adopted it as a maxim, that every advantage

vantage may be fairly taken againſt an enemy: *Dolus an virtus, quis in hoſte requirit.*

But Mr. Wilkes attacked Lord B—— principally, not as a Scotchman, but as a favourite; and in this he acted both a generous and a patriotic part. Favourites ever have been, and ever will be odious, eſpecially if they intrude themſelves into the management of public affairs. I would not, indeed, deprive a king of the privilege, which every common man enjoys, of having a friend, or, if you will, a favourite: but if he has, let him confine him to a private ſtation, and not exalt him into a public one: let him, if he pleaſes, make him his groom of the ſtole, or chamberlain, or ſteward of his houſhold; but let him not appoint him ſecretary of ſtate, or firſt lord of the treaſury. In other words, let him make him one of his menial ſervants, but not one of the ſervants of the public. Within the former ſphere, a favourite may be ſafe, perhaps he may even be popular; in the latter ſphere he can never be popular, perhaps he cannot even be ſafe. And indeed I think it is not im-

probable, that had Lord B—— continued to this day groom of the ſtole, as he was at the time of his majeſty's acceſſion, he might now have been one of the moſt popular noblemen in England. Every act of generoſity, which the king performed, would have been aſcribed to his counſel and ſuggeſtion. Whereas by forcing himſelf into a public ſtation, he has borne the blame (whether juſtly or unjuſtly I pretend not to ſay) of moſt of the blunders which, for theſe ſeven years paſt, the miniſtry have committed.

This diſtinction between the menial ſervants of the king, and the ſervants of the public, ought ever to be carefully obſerved. A king may, of his own mere motion, and according to his good liking, appoint the former; but he never can, at leaſt, if he act like a wiſe king, he never ought, to appoint the latter, but in compliance with the voice of the public. A knowledge of the ceremonies and punctilios of a court, and of the common œconomy of a houſhold, may qualify a man for the firſt; but nothing but the moſt eminent parliamentary abilities can fit him for the

the laſt. Former parliaments have been ſo ſenſible of the neceſſity of this diſtinction, that they have frequently attempted to reſume into their own hands the appointment of the ſervants of the public. And, indeed, perhaps, it would be well for the nation, were ſuch an improvement made in the Government. We ſhould not then hear of the public treaſure being committed to the care of a thoughtleſs hair-brained youth, who, but a few years ago, gamed away his own private fortune; and all too for no other reaſon, than becauſe he has the addreſs to pleaſe the favourite, or becauſe during his childhood he happened to be the K——'s play-fellow.

I ſaid, that favourites were ever odious; and for the truth of this aſſertion, the whole Engliſh hiſtory will be my voucher. Gaveſton and the Spencers, in the reign of King Edward II. The Earls of Oxford and Suffolk, in the reign of King Richard II. Carr, Earl of Somerſet, in the reign of King James I. and Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, in that of King Charles I. are ſtriking inſtances to this purpoſe. And

what is remarkable, moſt of theſe favourites came to an untimely end, as did alſo moſt of the unhappy princes who had diſtinguiſhed them by their favour. Nor, indeed, in this is there any thing ſurpriſing: for as all theſe were weak princes (the truth is, none but weak princes ever have favourites) and as every man in an exalted ſtation is expoſed to the greater danger, the leſs he is qualified for the duties of his office, we have no reaſon to wonder, that theſe princes and their favourites met with the fate which finally befel them.

Another argument, which I have to urge in Mr. Wilkes's behalf, on this head, is, that if he attacked the Scottiſh favourite, he only treated him as he would have treated an Engliſh one: he would have attacked an Engliſh favourite with the ſame ſpirit and vehemence. The Engliſh have always pulled down their own favourites; and ſhall not they be allowed to pull down a Scottiſh favourite? Shall a man, becauſe born on the North ſide of the Tweed, be ſecured from the effects of that popular odium, which has been the unavoidable fate of all favourites

favourites without exception? Forbid it, juſtice! forbid it, common ſenſe! If any of the Scots ſhould be ſo very fooliſh as to maintain ſuch an abſurdity, pull down them and the favourite along with them. But I will anſwer for the generality of the Scottiſh nation, that they have too much ſenſe to maintain ſuch an abſurdity; and I can further ſay, from my own knowledge, that Mr. Wilkes has ſome as ſteady friends, and Lord B—— ſome as determined enemies, among the Scots, as among the Engliſh: friends and enemies, not from prejudice, but from principle; not on account of the trifling conſideration of the place of a man's birth, or the nature of his private conduct, but from a firm perſuaſion, that the one is a friend, the other an enemy to the liberties of his country.

A fourth objection, which you have to Mr. Wilkes, is, that he is an outlaw, and, of conſequence, not capable of being choſen a member of parliament; but of this objection the whole Engliſh hiſtory is one continued refutation. Outlaws have frequently been choſen members of parliament, and declared

declared too to be legally choſen by the parliament itſelf, the ſole judge of the qualifications of its own members. But, perhaps, you gentlemen of the Livery of London, may think yourſelves wiſer than the great council of the nation; though I queſtion much if the latter will be very willing, at leaſt in this reſpect, to ſubſcribe to your deciſion. In the 22d year of Q. Elizabeth, that is, in the year 1580, one Vaughan was choſen a member of parliament; and tho' an outlaw, he was allowed to take his ſeat in the houſe. In the 35th year of the ſame reign, the Commons expreſsly voted, and eſtabliſhed it as a general rule, that a perſon outlawed might be elected a member of parliament. Some oppoſition, it is true, was made to this practice by the ſucceeding monarch. In the 2d year of K. James I. Sir Francis Goodwin was choſen member for the county of Bucks; and his return, as uſual, was made into chancery. The chancellor, pronouncing him an outlaw, vacated his ſeat, and iſſued writs for a new election. Sir John Forteſcue was choſen in his place by the county; but the firſt act of

of the houſe was to reverſe the chancellor's ſentence, and reſtore Sir Francis to his ſeat.

This affair gave occaſion to a violent diſpute between the king and the commons; and many vehement ſpeeches were made upon it in the houſe. "By this courſe," ſaid a member, "the free elections of the "counties is taken away; and none ſhall "be choſen but ſuch as ſhall pleaſe the king "and council. Let us, therefore, with "fortitude, underſtanding, and ſincerity, "ſeek to maintain our privilege. This "cannot be conſtrued any contempt in us, "but merely a maintenance of our com-"mon rights, which our anceſtors have "left us, and which it is juſt and fit for us "to tranſmit to our poſterity." Another ſaid; "This may be called a *quo warranto* "to ſeize all our liberties." "A chan-"cellor," added a third, "by this courſe "may call a parliament, conſiſting of what "perſons he pleaſes. Any ſuggeſtion, by "any perſon, may be the cauſe of send-"ing a new writ. It is come to this "plain queſtion, whether the Chancery

or

" or Parliament ought to have autho-
" rity?" *

This matter, however, is now ſettled beyond the poſſibility of a doubt. The authority of the houſe in determining the legality of elections is abſolute, ſupreme, and uncontroulable by any other power; and as the houſe has repeatedly declared, that outlaws may be choſen members of parliament, it argues either the groſſeſt ignorance, or the moſt barefaced impudence, to aſſert the contrary.

A fifth objection which I have heard ſome of you make againſt chooſing Mr. Wilkes one of your Repreſentatives in parliament, is, that you were afraid, leſt, by ſo doing, you ſhould offend the king. I am really glad, gentlemen, to ſee ſuch a ſpirit of loyalty prevail in the City. 'Tis a noble plant; cheriſh it by all means. But remember, that loyalty is an attachment to the laws, not to the king; and as far as I underſtand the laws, they expreſsly

* Journals, 30 March, 1604.

forbid

forbid either the king, or any of his miniſters, to interfere, in the leaſt, in the election of members of parliament. Should you once come to be influenced in this matter by their advice, or a regard to their humour, we may expect, in time, to ſee the four City-members nominated by the —— like the barons of the Cinque-ports, or the ſixteen peers for Scotland.

Beſides, gentlemen, it is paying the king no compliment, to repreſent him as entertaining a perſonal antipathy to Mr. Wilkes. The king ſhould know no antipathy, but what the law inſpires. If Mr. Wilkes has offended the law, let him ſuffer the puniſhment, which the law directs; but let not the king, who is the chief executor of the law, add to the puniſhment from any private pique or animoſity. I'm afraid, therefore, gentlemen, that, in this inſtance, inſtead of paying the king a compliment, you have offered him an inſult. You have degraded him from the rank of a ſupreme magiſtrate, ſuperior to all little, low partialities, into that of a private man, full of ſpleen, paſſion, and prejudice.

Thus, gentlemen, have I impartially conſidered, and, I hope, effectually overturned all the objections, which I ever heard you bring

againſt chooſing Mr. Wilkes one of your Repreſentatives in Parliament. And now let me aſk you, how you can anſwer it, I do not ſay to your own conſcience (for that, I know, has no other ſtandard of right and wrong, than your own little, narrow, ſelfiſh intereſts) but to the world around you, that you refuſed chooſing, as one of your Repreſentatives, a man, who had diſtinguiſhed himſelf ſo nobly in the cauſe of liberty. How do you think it will ſound in the annals of Great Britain, that, in the year 1768, the Liverymen of London refuſed chooſing this man, who, but a few days after, was choſen by the independent Freeholders of the County of Middleſex? That the former were actuated by the baſe motive of venality and corruption, and the ſtill baſer motive of fear and cowardice; and that the latter acted only from a ſincere regard to the real intereſt and welfare of their country? Let the fact, however, ſound as it will, it will certainly be recorded by the faithful hiſtorian; and will tranſmit, with infamy, the name of the Liverymen of London to the lateſt poſterity.

FINIS.

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